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ABSTRACT

This study explored homosexual and heterosexual friend and love relationships as measured by Wright's (1984) Acquaintance Description Form-Final (ADF-F). It was hypothesized that homosexual relationships would vary from heterosexual relationships on certain aspects of the relationships. Homosexual subjects (N=78) responded toward a target person (friend and/or lover) using the ADF-F. The responses were compared to responses previously obtained from heterosexual subjects. The results indicated that male and female homosexual relationships appeared most similar to engaged heterosexual relationships, with the finding being most clear-cut for females. Contrary to expectations, homosexual love relationships were no less permanent or exclusive than were heterosexual love relationships. Male and female homosexual friendships were perceived as providing greater emotional salience when compared to heterosexual friendships. No significant differences were found when comparing male and female homosexual love relationships or male and female homosexual friendships. (Author)

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HOMOSEXUAL AND HETEROSEXUAL LOVE AND FRIEND RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores homosexual and heterosexual friend and love relationships as measured by Wright's (1984) Acquaintance Description Form-Final (ADF-F). It was hypothesized that homosexual relationships would vary from heterosexual relationships on certain aspects of the relationships. Homosexual subjects responded toward a Target Person (friend and/or lover) using the ADF-F. These responses were then compared to heterosexual subjects whose data had previously been obtained. Results indicated that male and female homosexual relationships appeared most similar to engaged heterosexual relationships, with the finding being most clear-cut for females. Contrary to expectations, homosexual love relationships were no less permanent or exclusive than heterosexual love relationships. Male and female homosexual friendships were perceived to provide greater emotional salience when compared to heterosexual friendships. No significant differences were found when comparing male and female homosexual love relationships or male and female homosexual friendships. Other findings and implications are discussed.

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METHOD

Subjects

Fifty female and 28 male homosexual subjects were enlisted through contact persons in various parts of the U.S. Subjects provided background information and used Wright's Acquaintance Description Form (ADF-F) to describe relationships with their lovers and/or best friends. As a caution concerning representativeness, 1) our sample was from a "hidden" population, 2) our procedure was vulnerable to a self-selection bias, and 3) many subjects reported involvement in their love relationships for one year or more.

Instrument

The ADF-F is composed of 65 items comprising 13 scales which include two indices of relationship strength (Voluntary Interdependence and the Person-Qua-Person factor), measures of five rewards (Utility Value, Ego Support Value, Stimulation Value, Self-Affirmation Value, Security Value), four relationship differentiation scales (Salience of Emotional Expression, Social Regulation, Exclusiveness, Permanence), an index of tension or strain (Maintenance Difficulty), and a measure of response bias (General Favorability). The subjects indicate their level of agreement by responding to each statement using a Likert scale ranging from zero to six.

Procedure

The subjects' scores were compared with those previously obtained

from heterosexual subjects responding to spouses, fiances, POSSLQs, romantic partners, and friends. Differences were assessed via ANOVAs. Where appropriate, the ANOVAs were followed by the Dunnett procedure for comparing several means with a common standard.

RESULTS

Contrary to expectations, no differences were found between lesbian and gay male love relationships. Nor were differences found in the way lesbians and gays responded to their best friends.

Lesbian and engaged heterosexual women did not differ in ADF-F responses to their love partners. Lesbians did differ, in varying ways, from heterosexual women describing husbands, POSSLQs, and romantic partners. (Table 1) For example, lesbian relationships were regarded as stronger on the Person-Qua-Person factor and on Salience of Emotional Expression than any of the female heterosexual relationships except engagement. Results for male homosexuals, although similar, were not as extensive. Especially noteworthy, male homosexuals regarded their love relationships as no less exclusive and no less permanent than did lesbians or heterosexuals of either sex. (Table 2)

Lesbians' responses to friends did not differ from those of heterosexual women. Homosexual men's friends differed from those of heterosexual men only with the respect of having higher levels of Salience of Emotional Expression.

TABLE 1
Mean ADF-F Scores of Heterosexual and Homosexual
Females Responding to Lovers

ADF-F Variables	Target Persons					Overall F
	Spouse (n=40)	Fiancé (n=43)	Romantic Partner (n=106)	POSSLQ (n=36)	Homosexual Lover (n=50)	
VID	26.40	26.65	24.48[a]	26.03	27.56	6.01*
PQP	26.98[b]	28.63	27.13[a]	27.42[c]	29.06	5.16*
UV	24.73[a]	26.42	25.13[a]	25.19	27.14	3.66***
ESV	22.25[a]	24.60	23.84[a]	23.50	25.70	5.07*
SV	20:05[b]	22.81	20.88	21.58	22.56	4.07**
SAV	23.23	26.23	24.59	23.81	25.30	3.54***
SHCV	23.30[c]	23.65	24.35	23.11	25.38	2.52
EMO	21.35[a]	23.51	22.36[c]	21.64[c]	24.26	3.83**
SORG	15.00	13.86	13.53	13.25	14.96	1.68
EXCL	27.45	28.53	26.01	25.75	26.48	2.44
PERM	23.80	23.63	18.07[a]	19.42	22.18	15.51*
MD	10.43	8.44	9.54	10.28	8.56	1.52
GF	25.48[c]	27.49	25.67[b]	26.00	27.12	3.76***

*$p < .001$ **$p < .005$ ***$p < .01$

[a,b,c] Differs from the homosexual group at, respectively, the .01, .02, or .05 level of significance according to the Dunnett test.

TABLE 2

Mean ADF-F Scores of Heterosexual and Homosexual Males Responding to Lovers

ADF-F Variables	Target Persons: Spouse (n=40)	Fiancée (n=43)	Romantic Partner (n=59)	POSSLQ (n=36)	Homosexual Lover (n=19)	Overall F
VID	25.65[a]	26.77	25.54[a]	24.69[a]	28.26	3.39
PQP	26.95[a]	27.91	27.75[c]	26.44[a]	29.05	2.84
UV	26.03	27.07	26.10	25.78	27.21	1.23
FSV	22.65[a]	24.60	24.46	23.58	25.63	3.08
SV	20.10	21.53	21.64	19.39	21.95	2.31
SAV	23.30	25.84	25.49	23.31	25.32	4.23**
SBLV	22.58[b]	23.21[c]	23.88	22.53[b]	25.53	2.46
EMO	20.55	22.63	21.98	19.03[a]	23.37	4.91*
SORG	16.33	14.28	14.71	15.00	17.26	1.95
EXCL	25.68	27.63	26.42	24.28	25.95	2.26
PERM	24.40	23.00	19.20[c]	18.64[c]	22.37	9.53*
MD	10.48	10.21	9.56	11.42	9.05	.95
GF	25.53[c]	27.26	26.98	25.64[c]	27.68	3.08

*$p < .001$ **$p < .005$

a,b,c Differs from the homosexual group at, respectively, the .01, .02, or .05 level of significance according to the Dunnett test.

CONCLUSIONS

Even though no differences exist between similar male and female relationships, it is difficult to explain the dynamics involved with the data obtained from this study. It was hypothesized that certain variables would differ significantly between male and female homosexual love relationships. Most notably, it was expected that males' love relationships would be described as being less exclusive and less fulfilling in terms of emotional salience. One explanation for the lack of significance may be that the majority of male participants had been involved in their love relationships for at least one year. Twenty-six percent indicated the length of their relationships to be five years or more. Given the length of the relationships, and the possibility that only those males in ideal relationships chose to participate in the study, the lack of male/female differences in terms of love relationships becomes more understandable. However, the differences between homosexual and heterosexual relationships exist. Again, given the possible factors involved, such as length of the relationships, acceptance of homosexual relationships by the society, and so on, it is no more easy to explain the differences. The fact that a number of participants have had romantic relationships with their best friend Target Persons could also be a confounding variable in this study. However, the data does reveal somewhat clear-cut patterns between homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

REFERENCE

Wright, P.H. (1984). Self-referent motivation and the intrinsic quality of friendship. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1, 115-130.